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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE LISTED URBAN SITES OF TURKEY

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Europa Nostra-Turkey is an independent association that works in parallel with the European Federation of Cultural Heritage Organisations, Europa Nostra. For many years, the relationship between Europa Nostra and heritage NGOs in Turkey – a country with a multi-layered and deep-rooted cultural heritage – remained quite limited, and individual and organisational membership rarely meant active involvement in Europa Nostra's activities.

Establishment of Europa Nostra-Turkey

On 8-12 June 2010, the Europa Nostra Istanbul Congress and a successful series of parallel activities were organised by the members of Europa Nostra in Turkey. After the Congress, the members – both individual and institutional – that play a role in Turkish heritage came together to establish an independent association under the banner of Europa Nostra-Turkey. Following the Europa Nostra Congress in June 2010, a Founding Board was formed by a committee made up of individuals and organisations, most of which had recently become members of Europa Nostra. It was officially established as an NGO that aims to stimulate cultural heritage activities in Turkey and to develop joint projects with national and European Institutions on October 14th, 2011 by 71 founding members.

Europa Nostra-Turkey is intended to conduct parallel activities with Europa Nostra to bring dynamism and a wider scope to the relationship between Europe and Turkey, especially in terms of conservation, awareness-raising and education in cultural heritage. It is hoped that such interaction will provide many benefits for cultural heritage organisations and individuals on both sides. The timing of this opportunity is of particular importance as there is a rising interest in the cultural heritage of Turkey, especially its historical monuments and those sites currently on the World Heritage List. Either directly or through the activities of its member organizations, the Europa Nostra-Turkey Association is working towards unifying the cultural heritage circles of Turkey around a common concept of cultural heritage that is in-line with definitions developed by UNESCO, the European Council, and the European Union; strengthening communication between institutions and individuals working in related fields; shaping cultural policies to better ensure heritage conservation; and raising cultural heritage protection standards.

The Main Aim of the Europa Nostra-Turkey

The main aim of Europa Nostra-Turkey can be explained as the transposing of the intellectual and professional experiences of Europe to the Turkish case; sharing the success stories as well as the problems facing Turkey within European heritage circles; establishing wide-ranging partnerships with other European countries; providing educational opportunities in the field of cultural heritage for citizens of all ages; and increasing media awareness of cultural heritage.

The functioning of Europa Nostra-Turkey is based on the voluntary principle. The coordination of volunteer work and activities in areas with limited volunteer participation are undertaken without any professional staff. Europa Nostra-Turkey acts according to the institutional structure, strategies and methods indicated in its Statute, and draws on the experience of Europa Nostra for those issues that are not covered by the Statute.

Every organisation or individual that shares the vision of Europa Nostra-Turkey is eligible to join the association as long as the legal requirements for membership are met. The Istanbul office is the sole branch of Europa Nostra-Turkey.

Activities of the Europa Nostra-Turkey

The three central themes of Europa Nostra have been adopted by Europa Nostra-Turkey:

- (1) Celebrating the best of European cultural heritage:
Each year, Europa Nostra rewards the best cultural heritage achievements. Through the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra Awards, it celebrates excellence and dedication among architects, artisans, volunteers, schools, local communities, heritage owners and media. Through example, it hopes to stimulate creativity and innovation.
- (2) Campaigning in favour of Heritage at Risk:
Europa Nostra campaigns against the many threats to Europe's cultural heritage. When monuments or sites are in danger from uncontrolled development, environmental change, neglect or conflict, Europa Nostra highlights the issue and seeks to facilitate cooperation and solidarity between heritage organisations and activists.
- (3) Lobbying:
Europa Nostra is working towards making cultural heritage a European priority. Europa Nostra is the primary connection to the European Union, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

The Europa Nostra-Turkey Association intends to:

- (1) establish publicly accessible databases of leading cultural heritage organisations, institutions and experts in both Europe and Turkey,
- (2) conduct studies on cultural heritage policies, standards, education, lobbies and the methods of awareness-raising in Turkey, and share the research results with the public and experts in both Europe and Turkey,
- (3) collect any necessary information, documents and publications and establish a knowledge and document centre through an institutional website and publications such as bulletins, periodicals, brochures and books,
- (4) organise a year-round seminar or panel series and annual conferences, and produce audiovisual material of various kinds to raise cultural heritage awareness,
- (5) arrange heritage tours, meetings, competitions, and exhibitions, etc., and/or facilitate the participation of its members in such events,
- (6) encourage excellence in the field of cultural heritage, nominate exemplary projects for the European awards, and lobby for the establishment of new prize and grant programs,
- (7) campaign to raise public awareness of at-risk heritage sites,

- (8) assist cultural heritage organisations to improve their capabilities,
- (9) work for the establishment of higher standards in cultural heritage and the development of sustainable policies,
- (10) collaborate with university departments which teach cultural heritage and act for the proliferation of high-quality educational institutions in this field,
- (11) contribute to cultural heritage collaborations between public offices, private agencies and non-governmental organisations,
- (12) endeavour to increase the financial and in-kind support of local and central governments and the private sector, and inform the general public about available support programs.

Some Observations on the Listed Urban Sites of Turkey

The following section of the paper gives a summary of some of the findings of research based on the observations and surveys of listed urban sites which were carried out by the members of Europa Nostra-Turkey.

In this research, the practice of conservation and planning implementation in listed sites were studied. The study was also intended to reveal the difficulties encountered by related institutions, and in particular by local authorities.



Süleymaniye World Heritage Site

According to the findings of the research, the local authorities stated that they had difficulty in putting the protection regulations and conservation and development plans into practice.

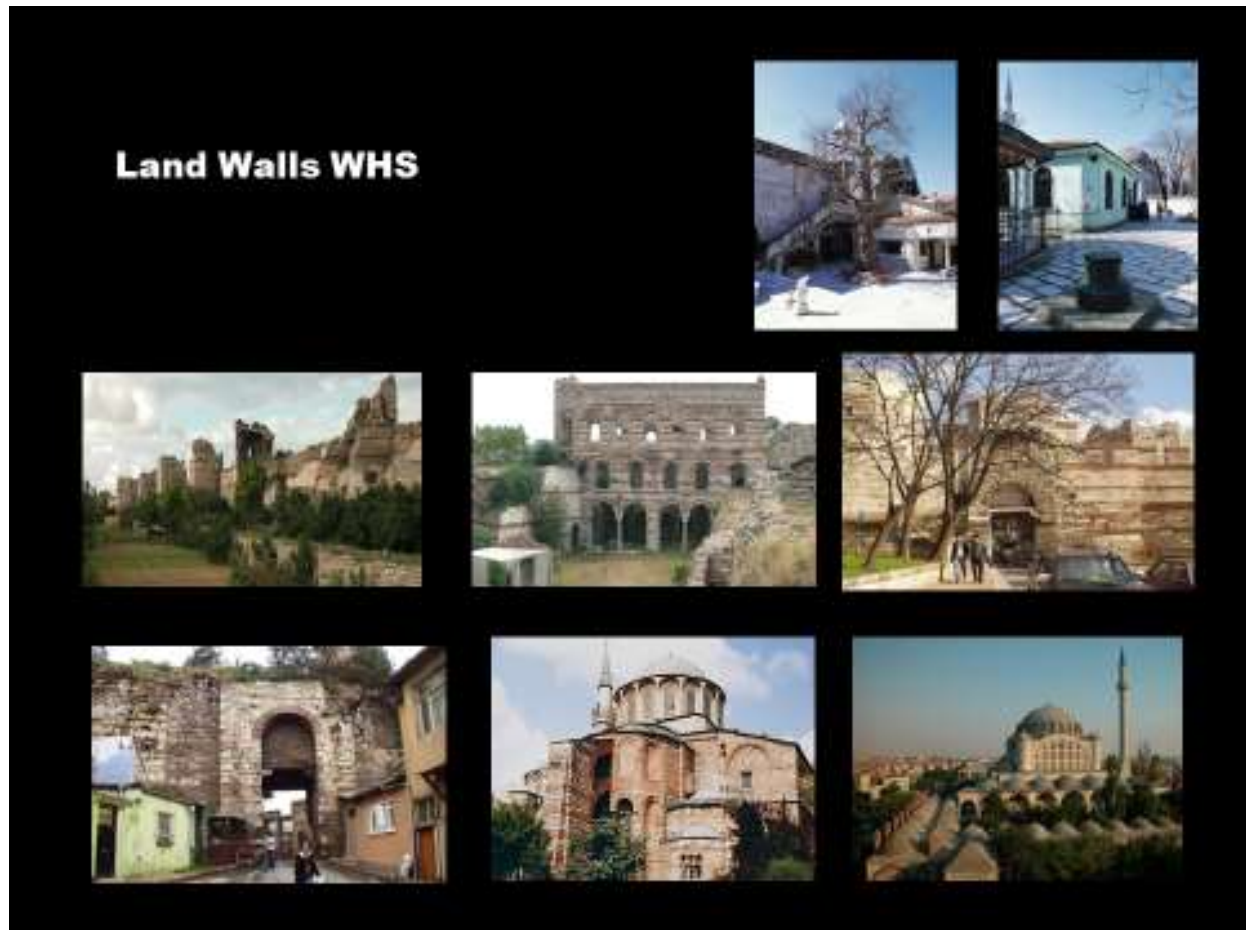
It was determined that the primary reason for this difficulty was a lack of sufficient and workable conservation development plans and programs. The survey revealed that apart from the availability of applicable conservation plans, a lack of public support and shortages of money, technical information and qualified professional staff were among the main reasons for failures of implementation. Local authorities also stated that after the designation decision has been taken, the preparation of the plans for practical implementation takes too long. They stated that the designation and/or listing decisions are not enough to guarantee conservation practices. It was observed that many sites which were the subject of conservation orders were either left to become decayed and dilapidated after the listing decisions were taken, or were demolished by their owners.

Many other listed buildings have been exposed to negative environmental conditions by the deliberate making of holes in their roofs or by the breaking of their windows, thus making it more likely that they will collapse of their accord.



Zeyrek World Heritage Site

The owners of listed buildings often try to overturn the conservation order in the hope that their old buildings can be torn down and replaced by high-value “apartment blocks”. It was discovered that very few owners whose buildings had been listed approved of the conservation order, and that the vast majority were either indifferent to or disapproved of, the decision.



Land Walls World Heritage Site

The owners of listed buildings who want either to empty or demolish them generally cite the following as the most important reasons: the profit they will make as a result of rebuilding the house; the temptation from increasing land values; the problems of multi-ownership arising from inheritance; the inappropriate infrastructure (mostly bathrooms, toilets and plumbing); the cost and struggles with insect and rodent infestations; the size of old buildings; the respectability of having and living in a new apartment block; and troubles in heating old structures.

The research showed that in cases where conservation orders are combined with economically viable activities that provide income, and where local people are involved in the process, much more satisfactory results are achieved.